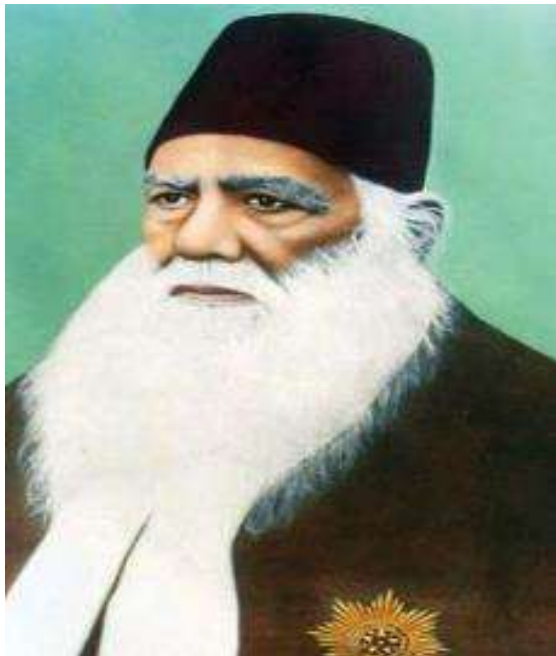


SIR SYED AHMED KHAN (1817-1898)



PYQ

1. "When a nation becomes devoid of arts and learning, it invites poverty." (Sir Syed Ahmad Khan). In the light of this statement, assess the role of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan as a reformer in modern India. (2021, 200W, 15M)
2. Comment on: Syed Ahmed Khan as a modernizer. (2013, 150W, 10M)

Question: Critically evaluate the role of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan as Modernizer.

OR

Question: Why Sir Syed Ahmed Khan is a controversial figure among the leaders of modern India?

Introduction

- The status of Khan among Muslims can be considered on par with that of **Raja Ram Mohan Roy**.
- He is not a political philosopher in the conventional sense but a social reformer and, specifically, an **educationist**.
- He was a controversial figure, facing criticism not only from **Hindus** but also from **Orthodox Muslims** due to his attempts at modernization within Islamic society.

Background:

- Sir Syed Ahmed Khan belonged to the elite class; his family had been in the service of the Mughals.
- He witnessed the decline of Mughal power in India.
- During his time, his community was facing stagnation, alienation, and a state of frustration.
- The British considered Muslims responsible for the **revolt of 1857**, leading them to start giving preference to Hindus.
- Sir Syed Ahmed Khan believed that the upliftment of Muslims was possible only through modern education.
- He thought that the British were going to stay in India, so there was no point in the Muslim community fighting against them.
- Instead, Muslims should focus on their own educational development. To promote education among Muslims, he emphasized the need for support from the British.
- In his book *Asbab-e-Baghawat-e-Hind*, he clarified that it was the exploitative policies of the British, rather than the actions of Muslims, that were responsible for the revolt of 1857.
- He also provided instances where Muslims actually helped the British during the mutiny.
- Sir Syed Ahmed Khan advised Muslim youth not to join the Congress.
- He was convinced that in the coming years, the Congress would become the main oppositional force against the British in India. In his article titled *The Loyal Muhammadans of India*, he expressed his loyalty to the British.
- Khan was successful in gaining British support for the establishment of the **Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College**, which later became **Aligarh Muslim University**.

Transition in thoughts:

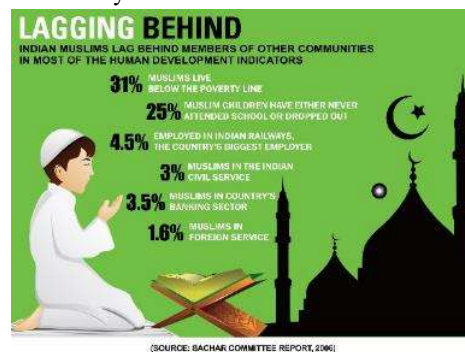
- There was a transition in the thoughts of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. Initially, he was an advocate of Hindu-Muslim unity.
- He used to say that Hindus and Muslims are the two eyes of the beautiful bride, India.
- He even advised Muslims not to eat beef and to respect the sentiments of their Hindu neighbours.
- Why there is change in attitude?**
 - It is believed that the language controversy in the province of Awadh was responsible for the change in Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's attitude.
 - Urdu, in the Persian script**, was the official language of Awadh. There was a movement demanding that **Hindi in the Devanagari script** be made the official language.
 - Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was hurt by the support for Hindi.
 - He became convinced that Hindus would never agree to what Muslims wanted, and Muslims would never agree to what Hindus wanted.
 - He believed that in the future, the number of areas of **disagreement between the two communities would increase**. He was convinced that co-existence was not possible because of the differences between the two communities.
 - Hence, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan is also regarded as the originator of the **"Two-Nation Theory."**
- Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was criticised by the orthodox sections of his community for his attempts to bring about modernisation.
- He criticised outdated customs and traditions among Muslims through his magazine *Tehzeeb-ul-Akhlaq*.



- According to him, Islam is a religion that can easily adopt a scientific way of life. He offered a modernist interpretation of Islam. **He used to say that Muslim youth should carry the Quran in one hand and a book of science in the other.**
- He established the **Scientific Society** for the promotion of scientific research in Ghazipur, UP. He also brought out the *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, a journal for the promotion of scientific research.
- His efforts towards modernising Islam were criticised by the orthodox sections.

Conclusion:

- Sir Syed Ahmed Khan remained a **controversial figure**, and unlike **Maulana Azad**, who is regarded as a nationalist, he is seen as a leader of his community.



- However, looking at Muslim communities situation, we can say that the Muslim youth in India need leaders like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan.
- The Muslim community continues to face significant exclusion and marginalisation in present times.
- The Sachar Committee reported on the educational backwardness of Muslims. Even after 17 years since the publication of the Sachar Committee Report (2006), there has been no change in the status of Muslims.
- Only through educational empowerment can the Muslim community address its backwardness.

Student Notes